



DONNA SEIDEL
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
ASSISTANT MAJORITY LEADER

Testimony of Rep. Donna Seidel
Assembly Bill 209
Senate Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations
October 21, 2009

Good morning Chairman Risser and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of AB 209.

This legislation is very simple and straightforward. Under current law, county boards may appropriate money to community agencies that provide human services to local residents. This bill adds non-profits that serve victims of domestic violence and related crimes to the statute to explicitly authorize county boards to allocate money to these organizations as well.

I introduced this legislation at the request of the Marathon County Board, which voted to allocate \$500,000 to The Women's Community in Wausau to assist with their capital building project. Upon looking at the current state statutes, the Corporation Counsel realized that the board did not have this authority.

The Marathon County Board has a capital improvements' committee that determines the county's funding priorities and The Women's Community project was ranked as the No. 1 funding priority for 2010. AB 209 preserves local control by leaving these funding decisions up to counties, the language is permissive not mandatory. Marathon County Supervisors have been assured that any similar requests from community groups in the future will be required to go through the same ranking process and there will be no obligation to make contributions in the future.

There are many organizations like The Women's Community in Wausau and around the state that play an important role in assisting citizens who are in need. By authorizing counties to make contributions to these non-profit organizations if they choose, we are giving counties one more option when allocating funds.

You will be receiving a letter of support from the Marathon County Board Chair. This bill also has the support of the Wisconsin Counties Association and the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

AB 209 passed the Assembly on voice vote at the end of September. There is a tight timeline for this bill as the county budget will be finalized in early November and the \$500,000 will only be released to The Women's Community upon passage of AB 209.

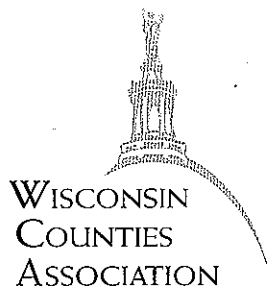
I would now like to introduce you to Jane Graham Jennings who is the Executive Director of The Women's Community who will explain how her organization would utilize the money from the Marathon County Board.

Thank you for your attention to this legislation.

85TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

STATE CAPITOL: P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708 ♦ (608) 266-0654 ♦ TOLL-FREE: 1-888-534-0085

FAX: (608) 282-3685 ♦ E-MAIL: rep.seidel@legis.wi.gov



22 EAST MIFFLIN STREET, SUITE 900
MADISON, WI 53703
TOLL FREE: 1.866.404.2700
PHONE: 608.663.7188
FAX: 608.663.7189
www.wicounties.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations

FROM: Sarah Diedrick-Kasdorf, Senior Legislative Associate *SK*

DATE: October 21, 2009

SUBJECT: Support for Assembly Bill 209

The Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) supports Assembly Bill 209 which authorizes a county to appropriate funds to a nonprofit organization if the nonprofit has as a primary purpose providing assistance to individuals who are the victims of domestic violence and related crimes.

County governments work with a wide array of service providers and nonprofit entities whose mission complements the work of county human/social service departments. As county governments are not statutorily provided home rule authority, counties may only undertake such tasks and functions expressly authorized in state statute. State statute does not expressly allow counties to make contributions to nonprofit organizations; therefore, the statutory change proposed in Assembly Bill 209 is necessary for counties to provide financial support to its partner agencies.

The bill does not require that counties make payments to nonprofit organizations; rather, it provides counties that wish to make a financial contribution the ability to do so.

WCA respectfully requests your support for Assembly Bill 209.

Thank you for considering our comments.



COUNTY OF MARATHON

COURTHOUSE - 500 FOREST STREET

WAUSAU, WISCONSIN 54403-5568

**MARATHON COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

(715) 261-1500
FAX (715) 261-1515

Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Ethics Reform and Government Operations
State of Wisconsin
2009-2010 Legislature

RE: 2009 ASSEMBLY BILL 209

I support AB-209. This bill will authorize a county to appropriate money to a non-profit organization that provides assistance to individuals who are victims of domestic violence and related crimes.

Recently the Marathon County Board was frustrated in its desire to contribute to a capital campaign for a domestic violence shelter. This contribution was identified as a top priority by our Capital Improvements Committee, but was removed from the list of approved projects because it was determined that the County lacked the legal authority to take this action.

The Marathon County Board was able to provide the land for the construction of a new facility for the Humane Society, but was not able to contribute to the capital campaign of the women's shelter. Obviously, something needs correction and AB-209 will make the needed corrections.

Domestic Violence is an important issue in Marathon County. Our 2007-2009 Life Report identifies Domestic Abuse as one of the greatest three challenges for call to action. That report says that despite attention to this issue, domestic abuse continues to get worse and results in many women and children living in fear. This problem will require a collaborative community response. AB-209 will allow County Government to be a part of a community response.

We hope that the Committee will act quickly to approve this legislation because the Marathon County Board is in the final stages of approving our 2010 budget. The Finance Committee approved \$500,000 for The Women's Community contingent on the passage of AB 209 by the time the full board votes on the final budget in early November.

I appreciate the support that our Marathon County Legislators have given to AB-209 including Assembly Representatives Seidel and Petrowski and Senator Decker. I also appreciate the support given to the Bill by the Wisconsin Counties Association.

Thank you for this opportunity to express support for AB-209.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith Langenhahn".

Keith Langenhahn, Chair
Marathon County Board of Supervisors